2014 GENERAL SESSION
STATE OF UTAH
Chief Sponsor: Howard A. Stephenson
House Sponsor: John Knotwell
LONG TITLE
General Description:
This bill modifies the Forfeiture and Disposition of Property Act regarding forfeiture
procedures.
Highlighted Provisions:
This bill:
 modifies the definition of a claimant of property seized for forfeiture;
 reduces, and makes mandatory, the number of days within which a prosecutor must
file a complaint for civil forfeiture;
 provides that the prosecutor is not required to serve notice on a claimant who has
disclaimed ownership of the seized property;
 requires that service by publication must include a newspaper of general circulation;
 provides that if the prosecuting attorney does not file a forfeiture complaint within
60 days after the seizure, the property shall be promptly returned and no further
prosecutorial action may be taken;
 requires that a prevailing property owner shall be awarded reasonable legal and
attorney costs;
 establishes limitations and procedural requirements regarding the transfer of seized
property to the federal government; and
• limits the amount of forfeited property that may be applied to prosecutorial attorney
fees to 20% of the value of the property or the actual amount of attorney fees,

ASSET FORFEITURE AMENDMENTS



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28	whichever is less.
29	Money Appropriated in this Bill:
30	None
31	Other Special Clauses:
32	None
33	Utah Code Sections Affected:
34	AMENDS:
35	24-1-102 , as enacted by Laws of Utah 2013, Chapter 394
36	24-4-104, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2013, Chapter 394
37	24-4-105 , as enacted by Laws of Utah 2013, Chapter 394
38	24-4-110, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2013, Chapter 394
39	24-4-114, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2013, Chapter 394
40	24-4-115, as enacted by Laws of Utah 2013, Chapter 394
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42	Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:
43	Section 1. Section 24-1-102 is amended to read:
44	24-1-102. Definitions.
45	As used in this title:
46	(1) "Account" means the Criminal Forfeiture Restricted Account created in Section
47	24-4-116.
48	(2) (a) "Acquittal" means a finding by a jury or a judge at trial that a claimant is not
49	guilty.
50	(b) An acquittal does not include:
51	(i) a verdict of guilty on a lesser or reduced charge;
52	(ii) a plea of guilty to a lesser or reduced charge; or
53	(iii) dismissal of a charge as a result of a negotiated plea agreement.
54	(3) "Agency" means any agency of municipal, county, or state government, including
55	law enforcement agencies, law enforcement personnel, and multijurisdictional task forces.
56	(4) [(a)] "Claimant" means any:
57	[(i)] (a) owner of property as defined in this section;
58	[(ii)] (b) interest holder as defined in this section; or

or by operation of law.

59	[(iii) person from whom property is seized for forfeiture.]
60	[(b) A claimant does not include a person or entity who disclaims in writing ownership
61	of or interest in property.]
62	(c) person or entity who asserts a claim to any property seized for forfeiture under this
63	title.
64	(5) "Commission" means the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice.
65	(6) "Complaint" means a civil in rem complaint seeking the forfeiture of any real or
66	personal property under this title.
67	(7) "Constructive seizure" means a seizure of property where the property is left in the
68	control of the owner and the seizing agency posts the property with a notice of intent to seek
69	forfeiture.
70	(8) (a) "Contraband" means any property, item, or substance that is unlawful to
71	produce or to possess under state or federal law.
72	(b) All controlled substances that are possessed, transferred, distributed, or offered for
73	distribution in violation of Title 58, Chapter 37, Utah Controlled Substances Act, are
74	contraband.
75	(9) "Innocent owner" means a claimant who:
76	(a) held an ownership interest in property at the time the conduct subjecting the
77	property to forfeiture occurred, and:
78	(i) did not have actual knowledge of the conduct subjecting the property to forfeiture;
79	or
80	(ii) upon learning of the conduct subjecting the property to forfeiture, took reasonable
81	steps to prohibit the illegal use of the property; or
82	(b) acquired an ownership interest in the property and who had no knowledge that the
83	illegal conduct subjecting the property to forfeiture had occurred or that the property had been
84	seized for forfeiture, and:
85	(i) acquired the property in a bona fide transaction for value;
86	(ii) was a person, including a minor child, who acquired an interest in the property
87	through probate or inheritance; or
88	(iii) was a spouse who acquired an interest in property through dissolution of marriage

(10) (a) "Interest holder" means a secured party as defined in Section 70A-9a-102, a
mortgagee, lien creditor, or the beneficiary of a security interest or encumbrance pertaining to
an interest in property, whose interest would be perfected against a good faith purchaser for
value.

- (b) "Interest holder" does not mean a person who holds property for the benefit of or as an agent or nominee for another person, or who is not in substantial compliance with any statute requiring an interest in property to be recorded or reflected in public records in order to perfect the interest against a good faith purchaser for value.
- (11) "Known address" means any address provided by a claimant to the agency at the time the property was seized, or the claimant's most recent address on record with a governmental entity if no address was provided at the time of the seizure.
- (12) "Legal costs" means the costs and expenses incurred by a party in a forfeiture action.
 - (13) "Legislative body" means:
- (a) (i) the Legislature, county commission, county council, city commission, city council, or town council that has fiscal oversight and budgetary approval authority over an agency; or
 - (ii) the agency's governing political subdivision; or
- (b) the lead governmental entity of a multijurisdictional task force, as designated in a memorandum of understanding executed by the agencies participating in the task force.
- (14) "Multijurisdictional task force" means a law enforcement task force or other agency comprised of persons who are employed by or acting under the authority of different governmental entities, including federal, state, county or municipal governments, or any combination of these agencies.
- (15) "Owner" means any person or entity, other than an interest holder, that possesses a bona fide legal or equitable interest in real or personal property.
 - (16) (a) "Proceeds" means:
- (i) property of any kind that is obtained directly or indirectly as a result of the commission of an offense that gives rise to forfeiture; or
- 119 (ii) any property acquired directly or indirectly from, produced through, realized 120 through, or caused by an act or omission regarding property under Subsection (16)(a)(i).

121	(b) "Proceeds" includes any property of any kind without reduction for expenses
122	incurred in the acquisition, maintenance, or production of that property, or any other purpose
123	regarding property under Subsection (16)(a)(i).
124	(c) "Proceeds" is not limited to the net gain or profit realized from the offense that
125	gives rise to forfeiture.
126	(17) "Program" means the State Asset Forfeiture Grant Program established in Section
127	24-4-117.
128	(18) "Property" means all property, whether real or personal, tangible or intangible, but
129	does not include contraband.
130	(19) "Prosecuting attorney" means:
131	(a) the attorney general and any assistant attorney general;
132	(b) any district attorney or deputy district attorney;
133	(c) any county attorney or assistant county attorney; and
134	(d) any other attorney authorized to commence an action on behalf of the state under
135	this title.
136	(20) "Public interest use" means a:
137	(a) use by a government agency as determined by the legislative body of the agency's
138	jurisdiction; or
139	(b) donation of the property to a nonprofit charity registered with the state.
140	(21) "Real property" means land and includes any building, fixture, improvement,
141	appurtenance, structure, or other development that is affixed permanently to land.
142	Section 2. Section 24-4-104 is amended to read:
143	24-4-104. Civil forfeiture procedure.
144	(1) (a) Within $[90]$ $\underline{60}$ days from the date the property is seized, the prosecuting
145	attorney [may elect to] shall file a complaint for civil forfeiture in the appropriate district court.
146	(b) The complaint shall describe with reasonable particularity the:
147	(i) property that is the subject of the forfeiture proceeding;
148	(ii) date and place of seizure; and
149	(iii) factual allegations that constitute a basis for forfeiture.
150	(2) (a) After the complaint is filed, the prosecuting attorney shall serve a copy of the
151	complaint and summons upon each claimant known to the prosecuting attorney within 30 days.

152	(b) The prosecuting attorney is not required to serve a copy of the complaint or the
153	summons upon any claimant who has disclaimed, in writing, an ownership interest in the
154	seized property.
155	[(b)] (c) Service of the complaint and summons shall be by:
156	(i) personal service;
157	(ii) certified mail, return receipt requested, to the claimant's known address; or
158	(iii) service by publication, if the prosecuting attorney demonstrates to the court that
159	service cannot reasonably be made by personal service or certified mail[, the court may then
160	allow service by electronic publication].
161	(d) Service by publication shall be by publication of two notices, in two successive
162	weeks, of the forfeiture proceeding:
163	(i) in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the seizure occurred;
164	<u>and</u>
165	(ii) on Utah's Public Legal Notice Website established in Subsection 45-1-101(2)(b).
166	[(e)] <u>(e)</u> Service is effective upon the earlier of:
167	(i) personal service;
168	(ii) mailing of a written notice; or
169	(iii) [electronic] publication.
170	[(d)] (f) Upon motion of the prosecuting attorney and a showing of good cause, the
171	court may extend the period to complete service under this section for an additional 60 days.
172	(3) (a) In any case where the prosecuting attorney files a complaint for forfeiture, a
173	claimant may file an answer to the complaint.
174	(b) The answer shall be filed within 30 days after the complaint is served upon the
175	claimant as provided in Subsection (2)(b).
176	(4) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, forfeiture proceedings are governed
177	by the Utah Rules of Civil Procedure.
178	(5) The court shall take all reasonable steps to expedite civil forfeiture proceedings and
179	shall give these proceedings the same priority as is given to criminal cases.
180	(6) In all suits or actions brought under this section for the civil forfeiture of any
181	property, the burden of proof is on the prosecuting attorney to establish by clear and convincing
182	evidence the extent to which, if any, the property is subject to forfeiture.

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183 (7) A claimant may file an answer to a complaint for civil forfeiture without posting 184 bond with respect to the property subject to forfeiture. 185 (8) If the prosecuting attorney does not file a civil complaint for forfeiture within 60 186 days of the seizure of the property, as required by Subsection 24-4-104(1): 187 (a) the seizing agency shall promptly return the property to the claimant; and 188 (b) the prosecuting attorney may take no further action to effect the forfeiture of the 189 property. 190 Section 3. Section **24-4-105** is amended to read: 191 24-4-105. Criminal forfeiture procedure. 192 (1) If a claimant is criminally prosecuted for conduct giving rise to the forfeiture, the 193 prosecuting attorney may elect to seek forfeiture of the claimant's interest in the property 194 through the criminal case. 195 (2) If the prosecuting attorney elects to seek forfeiture of the claimant's interest in the 196 property through the criminal case, the information or indictment shall state that the claimant's 197 interest in the property is subject to forfeiture and the basis for the forfeiture. 198 (3) (a) Upon application of the prosecuting attorney, the court may enter restraining orders or injunctions, or take other reasonable actions to preserve for forfeiture under this 199 200 section, any property subject to forfeiture if, after notice to known claimants and claimants who 201 can be identified after due diligence and who are known to have an interest in the property, and 202 after affording those persons an opportunity for a hearing, the court determines that: 203 (i) there is a substantial probability that the state will prevail on the issue of forfeiture 204 and that failure to enter the order will result in the property being sold, transferred, destroyed, 205 or removed from the jurisdiction of the court or otherwise made unavailable for forfeiture; and 206 (ii) the need to preserve the availability of the property or prevent its sale, transfer, destruction, or removal through the entry of the requested order outweighs the hardship against 207 208 any party against whom the order is to be entered. 209 (b) A temporary restraining order may be entered ex parte upon application of the 210 prosecuting attorney before or after an information or indictment has been filed with respect to

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(i) there is probable cause to believe that the property with respect to which the order is

sought would, in the event of a conviction, be subject to forfeiture under this section; and

the property, if the prosecuting attorney demonstrates that:

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(ii) provision of notice would jeopardize the availability of the property for forfeiture or would jeopardize an ongoing criminal investigation.

- (c) The temporary order expires not more than 10 days after entry unless extended for good cause shown or unless the party against whom it is entered consents to an extension.
- (d) After service of the temporary order upon any claimants known to the prosecuting attorney, a hearing concerning the order entered under this section shall be held as soon as practicable and prior to the expiration of the temporary order.
- (e) The court is not bound by the Utah Rules of Evidence regarding evidence it may receive and consider at any hearing under this section.
- (4) (a) Upon conviction of a claimant for conduct giving rise to criminal forfeiture, the prosecutor shall ask the finder of fact to make a specific finding as to whether the property or any part of it is subject to forfeiture.
- (b) A determination of whether property is subject to forfeiture under this section shall be proven beyond a reasonable doubt.
- (5) (a) Upon conviction of a claimant for violating any provision of state law subjecting a claimant's property to forfeiture and a finding by the trier of fact that the property is subject to forfeiture, the court shall enter a judgment and order the property forfeited to the state upon the terms stated by the court in its order.
- (b) Following the entry of an order declaring property forfeited, the court may, upon application of the prosecuting attorney, enter appropriate restraining orders or injunctions, require the execution of satisfactory performance bonds, appoint receivers, conservators, appraisers, accountants, or trustees, or take any other action to protect the interest of the state in property ordered forfeited.
- (6) (a) (i) After property is ordered forfeited under this section, the seizing agency shall direct the disposition of the property under Section 24-4-115.
- (ii) Any property right or interest under this Subsection (6)(a) not exercisable by or transferable for value to the state expires and does not revert to the defendant.
- (iii) The defendant or any person acting in concert with or on behalf of the defendant is not eligible to purchase forfeited property at any sale held by the seizing agency unless approved by the judge.
 - (b) The court may stay the sale or disposition of the property pending the conclusion of

any appeal of the criminal case giving rise to the forfeiture if the defendant demonstrates that proceeding with the sale or disposition of the property may result in irreparable injury, harm, or loss.

- (7) Except as provided under Subsection (3) or (10), a party claiming an interest in property subject to forfeiture under this section:
- (a) may not intervene in a trial or appeal of a criminal case involving the forfeiture of property under this section; and
- (b) may not commence an action at law or equity concerning the validity of the party's alleged interests in the property subsequent to the filing of an indictment or an information alleging that the property is subject to forfeiture under this section.
- (8) The district court that has jurisdiction of a case under this part may enter orders under this section without regard to the location of any property that may be subject to forfeiture under this section or that has been ordered forfeited under this section.
- (9) To facilitate the identification or location of property declared forfeited and to facilitate the disposition of petitions for remission or mitigation of forfeiture after the entry of an order declaring property forfeited to the state, the court may, upon application of the prosecuting attorney, order that the testimony of any witness relating to the forfeited property be taken by deposition, and that any book, paper, document, record, recording, or other material shall be produced as provided for depositions and discovery under the Utah Rules of Civil Procedure.
- (10) (a) (i) Following the entry of an order of forfeiture under this section, the prosecuting attorney shall publish notice of the order's intent to dispose of the property by [electronic] publication. Service by publication shall be by publication of two notices, in two successive weeks, of the forfeiture proceeding:
- (A) in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the seizure occurred; and
 - (B) on Utah's Public Legal Notice Website established in Subsection 45-1-101(2)(b).
- (ii) The prosecuting attorney shall also send written notice to any claimants, other than the defendant, known to the prosecuting attorney to have an interest in the property, at the claimant's known address.
 - (b) (i) Any claimant, other than the defendant, asserting a legal interest in property that

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has been ordered forfeited to the state under this section may, within 30 days after the notice has been published or the claimant receives the written notice under Subsection (10)(a), whichever is earlier, petition the court for a hearing to adjudicate the validity of the claimant's alleged interest in the property.

- (ii) Any genuine issue of material fact, including issues of standing, may be tried to a jury upon demand of any party.
 - (c) The petition shall:

- (i) be in writing and signed by the claimant under penalty of perjury;
- (ii) set forth the nature and extent of the claimant's right, title, or interest in the property, the time and circumstances of the claimant's acquisition of the right, title, or interest in the property; and
 - (iii) set forth any additional facts supporting the claimant's claim and the relief sought.
- (d) The trial or hearing on the petition shall be expedited to the extent practicable. The court may consolidate a trial or hearing on the petition and any petition filed by any claimant other than the defendant under this section. The court shall permit the parties to conduct pretrial discovery pursuant to the Utah Rules of Civil Procedure.
- (e) (i) At the trial or hearing, the claimant may testify and present evidence and witnesses on the claimant's own behalf and cross-examine witnesses who appear at the hearing. The prosecuting attorney may present evidence and witnesses in rebuttal and in defense of the claim to the property and cross-examine witnesses who appear.
- (ii) In addition to testimony and evidence presented at the trial or hearing, the court may consider the relevant portion of the record of the criminal case that resulted in the order of forfeiture.
 - (iii) Any trial or hearing shall be conducted pursuant to the Utah Rules of Evidence.
- (f) The court shall amend the order of forfeiture in accordance with its determination, if after the trial or hearing, the court or jury determines that the petitioner has established by a preponderance of the evidence that:
- (i) the claimant has a legal right, title, or interest in the property, and the right, title, or interest renders the order of forfeiture invalid in whole or in part because the right, title, or interest was vested in the claimant rather than the defendant or was superior to any right, title, or interest of the defendant at the time of the commission of the acts or conduct that gave rise

307	to the forfeiture of the property under this section; or
308	(ii) the claimant acquired the right, title, or interest in the property in a bona fide
309	transaction for value, and, at the time of acquisition, the claimant did not know that the
310	property was subject to forfeiture.
311	(g) Following the court's disposition of all petitions filed under this Subsection (10), or
312	if no petitions are filed following the expiration of the period provided in Subsection (10)(b)
313	for the filing of petitions, the state has clear title to property subject to the order of forfeiture
314	and may warrant good title to any subsequent purchaser or transferee.
315	Section 4. Section 24-4-110 is amended to read:
316	24-4-110. Attorney fees and costs.
317	(1) In any forfeiture proceeding under this chapter, the court [may] shall award a
318	prevailing [party] property owner reasonable:
319	(a) legal costs; and
320	(b) attorney fees.
321	(2) The legal costs and attorney fees awarded by the court to the prevailing party may
322	not exceed 20% of the value of the property.
323	(3) A [party] property owner that prevails only in part is entitled to recover reasonable
324	legal costs and attorney fees only on those issues on which the party prevailed.
325	Section 5. Section 24-4-114 is amended to read:
326	24-4-114. Transfer and sharing procedures.
327	(1) (a) Seizing agencies or prosecuting attorneys authorized to bring forfeiture
328	proceedings under this chapter may not directly or indirectly transfer property held for
329	forfeiture and not already named in a criminal indictment to any federal agency or any
330	governmental entity not created under and subject to state law unless[:] the court enters an
331	order, upon petition of the prosecuting attorney, authorizing the property to be transferred.
332	(b) The court may not enter an order authorizing a transfer under Subsection (1)(a)

- (i) the conduct giving rise to the investigation or seizure is interstate in nature and sufficiently complex to justify the transfer;
 - (ii) the property may only be forfeited under federal law; or

unless:

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337 (iii) pursuing forfeiture under state law would unreasonably burden prosecuting

330	attorneys of state law emorcement agencies.
339	[(b) In making a determination under this section, a court may conduct an in camera
340	inspection of evidence provided by the prosecuting attorney or seizing agency.]
341	(c) A petition to transfer property to a federal agency under this section shall include:
342	(i) a detailed description of the property seized;
343	(ii) the location where the property was seized;
344	(iii) the date the property was seized;
345	(iv) the case number assigned by the seizing law enforcement agency; and
346	(v) a declaration that:
347	(A) states the basis for relinquishing jurisdiction to a federal agency;
348	(B) contains the names and addresses of any claimants then known; and
349	(C) is signed by the prosecutor.
350	(d) The court may not authorize the transfer of property to the federal government if
351	the transfer would circumvent the protections of the Utah Constitution or of this chapter that
352	would otherwise be available to the property owner.
353	(e) (i) Prior to granting any order to transfer pursuant to this section, the court shall
354	give any claimant the right to be heard with regard to the transfer by the mailing of a notice to
355	each address contained in the declaration.
356	(ii) If no claimant objects to the petition to transfer property within 10 days of the
357	mailing of the notice, the court shall issue its order under this section.
358	(iii) If the declaration does not include an address for a claimant, the court shall delay
359	its order under this section for 20 days to allow time for the claimant to appear and make an
360	objection.
361	(f) (i) If a claimant contests a petition to transfer property to a federal agency, the court
362	shall promptly set the matter for hearing.
363	(ii) (A) The court shall determine whether the state may relinquish jurisdiction by a
364	standard of preponderance of the evidence.
365	(B) In making the determination, the court shall consider evidence regarding hardship,
366	complexity, judicial and law enforcement resources, and any other matter the court determines
367	to be relevant.
368	(2) All property, money, or other things of value received by an agency pursuant to

369	federal law, which authorizes the sharing or transfer of all or a portion of forfeited property or
370	the proceeds of the sale of forfeited property to an agency:
371	(a) shall be used in compliance with federal laws and regulations relating to equitable
372	sharing;
373	(b) may be used for those law enforcement purposes specified in Subsection
374	24-4-117(9); and
375	(c) may not be used for those law enforcement purposes prohibited in Subsection
376	24-4-117(10).
377	(3) A state or local law enforcement agency awarded any equitable share of property
378	forfeited by the federal government may only use the award money after approval of the use by
379	the agency's legislative body.
380	(4) Each year, every agency awarded any equitable share of property forfeited by the
381	federal government shall file with the commission:
382	(a) a copy of that agency's federal equitable sharing certification; and
383	(b) information, on a form provided by the commission, that details all awards received
384	from the federal government during the preceding reporting period, including:
385	(i) the agency's case number or other identification;
386	(ii) the amount of the award;
387	(iii) the date of the award;
388	(iv) the identity of any federal agency involved in the forfeiture;
389	(v) how the awarded property has been used; and
390	(vi) a statement signed by both the agency's executive officer or designee and by the
391	agency's legal counsel confirming that the agency has only used the awarded property for crime
392	reduction or law enforcement purposes authorized under Section 24-4-117, and only upon
393	approval by the agency's legislative body.
394	Section 6. Section 24-4-115 is amended to read:
395	24-4-115. Disposition and allocation of forfeiture property.
396	(1) Upon finding that property is subject to forfeiture under this chapter, the court shall
397	order the property forfeited to the state.
398	(2) (a) If the property is not currency, the seizing agency shall authorize a public or

otherwise commercially reasonable sale of that property that is not required by law to be

destroyed and that is not harmful to the public.

- (b) If the property forfeited is an alcoholic product as defined in Section 32B-1-102, it shall be disposed of as follows:
 - (i) an alcoholic product shall be sold if the alcoholic product is:
- (A) unadulterated, pure, and free from any crude, unrectified, or impure form of ethylic alcohol, or any other deleterious substance or liquid; and
 - (B) otherwise in saleable condition; or
- (ii) an alcoholic product and its package shall be destroyed if the alcoholic product is impure, adulterated, or otherwise unfit for sale.
- (c) If the property forfeited is a cigarette or other tobacco product as defined in Section 59-14-102, it shall be destroyed, except that prior to the destruction of any cigarette or other tobacco product seized pursuant to this part, the lawful holder of the trademark rights in the cigarette or tobacco product brand shall be permitted to inspect the cigarette.
- (d) The proceeds of the sale of forfeited property shall remain segregated from other property, equipment, or assets of the seizing agency until transferred to the state in accordance with this chapter.
- (3) From the forfeited property, both currency and the proceeds or revenue from the sale of the property, the seizing agency shall:
- (a) deduct the seizing agency's direct costs and expenses of obtaining and maintaining the property pending forfeiture; and
- (b) pay the <u>office of the prosecuting attorney the</u> legal costs [and attorney fees] associated with the litigation of the forfeiture proceeding, and up to 20% of the value of the seized property in attorney fees or the actual amount of the attorney fees, whichever is less.
- (4) If the forfeiture arises from any violation relating to wildlife resources, the remaining currency and the proceeds or revenue from the sale of the property shall be deposited in the Wildlife Resources Account created in Section 23-14-13.
- (5) The remaining currency and the proceeds or revenue from the sale of the property shall then be transferred to the commission and deposited into the account.

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Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel